

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 21, 2014

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Mr. Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

I write to bring your attention to an ongoing concern for Coloradans living along our Western Slope. Currently, DirecTV subscribers in Grand Junction, Colorado and its surrounding communities do not receive local television programming, which prevents them from viewing the news, weather and emergency information most relevant to them.

As you know, in order for a subscriber to receive local television through a satellite provider, the company must offer local-into-local service in the subscriber's Designated Market Area (DMA). While DISH currently provides local-into-local in all 210 DMAs in America, DirecTV only offers it in 197 out of 210 DMAs. The Grand Junction-Montrose DMA in western Colorado remains one of the few unserved media markets in the nation. This means subscribers in this area receive little local programming from Grand Junction affiliate stations of major broadcast networks and are denied access to critical local programming.

Further, without local-into-local service, DirecTV customers must rely on integrated "rabbit ear"-like devices to receive local broadcast signals. While DirecTV does offer such a device as a solution for its subscribers in the Grand Junction area, I have heard from constituents that this is an unreliable and burdensome fix, particularly in the surrounding, more rural communities near Grand Junction. This is particularly concerning given that a large percentage of constituents in the outskirts of Grand Junction are served primarily by satellite, and thus are already left with too few options in receiving pay-TV service.

As our communities grow more interconnected, and as access to emergency information and disaster-relief services becomes increasingly necessary, local programming is no longer a matter of simple convenience or consumer frustration, but also an issue of public safety. In recent years, the Western Slope has been hammered with flash floods, mudslides and devastating wildfires. Local programming provides Coloradans with critical information about response and recovery resources and services. As such, I ask that you review whether it is economically and technologically feasible for DirecTV to offer local-into-local service in the Grand Junction-Montrose DMA and work with DirecTV to ensure steps are taken to offer this programming.

Thank you for your consideration of my request, and I look forward to working with you to ensure consumers in the Grand Junction-Montrose DMA have access to the programming most relevant to them.

Sincerely,



Mark Udall
U.S. Senator



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

September 26, 2014

The Honorable Mark Udall
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Udall:

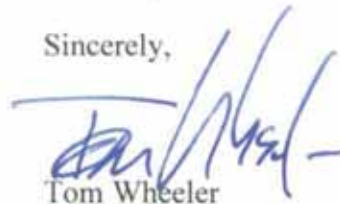
Thank you for your letter raising concerns about access to local broadcast stations via DirecTV's satellite service in the Grand Junction-Montrose Designated Market Area (DMA). I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

I agree that access to emergency information and local programming is an important issue for consumers. I also understand that in more rural areas of the country, satellite TV service may be the primary option for consumers. Given these issues, my staff has spoken with DirecTV and has forwarded your letter so they are aware of the concerns of your Grand Junction-Montrose constituents regarding the lack of local-into-local service. As you may know, current statutory provisions only require satellite TV providers to carry all of the broadcast stations in a particular market if the company chooses to carry at least one of the local signals.

Each of the providers – DirecTV and DISH – makes its own determination on how to allocate its channel capacity on its spot beam satellites. At this point, as you note, only DISH provides local-into-local service via satellite in all the local markets. DirecTV has opted to offer an integrated antenna-satellite dish combination to provide over-the-air reception of the local broadcast signals in 13 markets, including the Grand Junction-Montrose DMA.

Again, thank you for forwarding your concerns. I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler